



U.S. Department of Justice

**Ronald C. Machen Jr.**  
*United States Attorney for the  
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Information Contact:****Public Affairs**

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### **Former Employee of The Washington Times Pleads Guilty to Embezzling More Than \$96,000**

WASHINGTON – A former circulations systems assistant at The Washington Times, Elizabeth L. Dura, 53, pleaded guilty this afternoon to one count of bank fraud for embezzling more than \$96,000 from her former employer, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Dura, of Waldorf, Md., agreed as part of her plea agreement to criminal forfeiture and restitution in the amount of \$96,619. The Honorable Richard W. Roberts, of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, presided over the plea hearing. Under the voluntary federal sentencing guidelines, Dura faces between 12 and 18 months of incarceration. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for January 6, 2011.

According to the government's evidence, from October 24, 1988 to April 21, 2008, the defendant was employed as a circulations systems assistant at The Washington Times newspaper. Until 2009, The Washington Times employed "hawkers" and independent carrier contractors to distribute its newspapers in the Washington, D.C., area. Hawkers were minors who distributed newspapers in the summer months as part of the Youth Hawker Program. The hawkers and independent carrier contractors were supervised by field managers.

Dura's duties included preparing the paperwork required for a hawker or an independent carrier contractor to receive an internal account number, which would allow them to be paid. She did not have the authority to hire hawkers or independent carrier contractors, or to create account numbers for them without approval from a field manager or senior management at The Washington Times. For each pay period, the field managers would provide Dura with payment information for their respective hawkers and independent carrier contractors. Dura, in turn, would enter this information into a computer database, which would cause the accounting department at The Washington Times to generate checks in the names of the various hawkers and independent carrier contractors. Dura was one of the employees in the circulations department who would pick up checks from the accounting department.

From 2003 to 2008, Dura misused her position and access to the computer database to generate fraudulent checks from The Washington Times. She obtained account numbers for individuals who never worked at The Washington Times and requested checks in their names. Dura also requested checks in the names of individuals who had previously worked at The Washington Times but were not owed money at the time.

Once these checks were generated, Dura picked them up from the accounting department at The Washington Times and deposited or cashed them. On many of the checks, she forged the signature of the purported payee, signed her own name, and provided her own account number for the deposit. In total, Dura generated more than 200 fraudulent checks from The Washington Times in the total amount of \$96,619.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen commended the outstanding investigative work of Criminal Investigator Duncan Templeton and former Auditor Robert Jodoin. He also praised the efforts of Legal Assistant Jamasee Lucas, former Legal Intern Matthew Baker, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Diane Lucas, who worked on forfeiture issues, John Borchert, who worked on the investigation of the case, and David Johnson, who is prosecuting the case.

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